



New documents on political and social issues

August / September 2009

ALIGNING TEMPORARY IMMIGRATION VISAS WITH US LABOR MARKET NEEDS: THE CASE FOR A NEW SYSTEM OF PROVISIONAL VISAS

Migration Policy Institute, July 24, 2009

http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Provisional_visas.pdf

The report proposes creation of a new stream of visas to provide for the future flows of workers needed by the U.S. economy, stressing that comprehensive immigration reform legislation must include reform of the employment-based immigration system if it is to be effective.

ANALYSIS OF THE JULY DRAFT OF *THE AMERICAN AFFORDABLE HEALTH CHOICES ACT OF 2009*

Heritage Foundation, July 23, 2009

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/upload/HouseBillHeritageRevised.pdf>

The analysis examines the impact the House health reform bill would have on private insurance when a government-run health plan is introduced in the marketplace. It finds that 88.1 million Americans could be transitioned out of their current plan as employers opt out of continuing their existing coverage. These Americans would lose the employer coverage they now have. The study also found that nationwide 103.9 million Americans would end up on the new government-run public plan.

BABY BOOM MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL AMERICA

U.S. Department of Agriculture, August 10, 2009

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR79/ERR79.pdf>

Members of the baby boom cohort, now 45-63 years old, are approaching a period in their lives when moves to rural and small-town destinations increase. An analysis of age-specific, net migration during the 1990s reveals extensive shifts in migration patterns as Americans move through different life-cycle stages. Assuming similar age patterns of migration, the report identifies the types of nonmetropolitan counties that are likely to experience the greatest surge in baby boom migration during 2000-20 and projects the likely impact on the size and distribution of retirement-age populations in destination counties.

BORDER PATROL: CHECKPOINTS CONTRIBUTE TO BORDER PATROL'S MISSION, BUT MORE CONSISTENT DATA COLLECTION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT COULD IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS

U.S. Government Accountability Office, August 2009

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09824.pdf>

The U.S. Border Patrol, part of the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP), operates checkpoints on U.S. roads, mainly in the southwest border states where most illegal entries occur. As part of a three-tiered strategy to maximize detection and apprehension of illegal aliens, Border Patrol agents at checkpoints screen vehicles for illegal aliens and contraband. GAO work includes a review of Border Patrol data and guidance; visits to checkpoints and communities in five Border Patrol sectors across four southwest border states, selected on the basis of size, type, and volume, among other factors; and discussions with community members and Border Patrol officials in headquarters and field locations.

BROKEN LAWS, UNPROTECTED WORKERS: VIOLATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR LAWS IN AMERICA'S CITIES

National Employment Law Project, September 2009

http://nelp.3cdn.net/1797b93dd1ccdf9e7d_sdm6bc50n.pdf

The report exposes a world of work in which the core protections that many Americans take for granted: the right to be paid at least the minimum wage, the right to be paid for overtime hours, the right to take meal breaks, access to workers' compensation when injured, and the right to advocate for better working conditions, are failing significant numbers of workers. According to the report, the sheer breadth of the problem, spanning key industries in the economy, as well as its profound impact on workers, entailing significant economic hardship, demands urgent attention.

CBO'S LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY: 2009 UPDATE

Congressional Budget Office, August 2009

http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/104xx/doc10457/08-07-SocialSecurity_Update.pdf

According to the update, without changes in law, CBO expects that the Social Security trust funds will be exhausted in 2043. If that point is reached, the Social Security Administration will not have the legal authority to pay full benefits and the amounts that could be paid would be about 17 percent less than those scheduled under current law.

CHARTER SCHOOL REPLICATION: GROWING A QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR

National Association of Charter School Authorizers, July 2009

http://www.qualitycharters.org/files/public/Replication_Policy_Guide.pdf

"Replication" is the practice of a single charter school board or management organization opening several more schools that are each based on the same school model. The most rapid strategy to increase the number of new high-quality charter schools available to children is to encourage the replication of existing quality schools, according to the report.

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF HEALTH CARE REFORM ON SMALL BUSINESSES AND THEIR EMPLOYEES

Executive Office of the President of the United States, July 25, 2009

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/CEA-smallbusiness-july24.pdf>

The report from the Council of Economic Advisers examines the health care challenges faced by small businesses and their employees as well as the benefits of health reform for small businesses and their employees.

THE ETHICS OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

Institute for Policy Innovation, July 20, 2009

[http://ipi.org/IPI/IPIPublications.nsf/PublicationLookupFullTextPDF/7F68DCD97B1D1B93862575F600625568/\\$File/Ethics_of_Health_Care_Reform.pdf?OpenElement](http://ipi.org/IPI/IPIPublications.nsf/PublicationLookupFullTextPDF/7F68DCD97B1D1B93862575F600625568/$File/Ethics_of_Health_Care_Reform.pdf?OpenElement)

The report adds a philosophical dimension to health care reform debate, stating that, of all reform alternatives, only the consumer driven health care model is both ethical and sustainable. “The consumer driven model is the only one that incorporates both our fundamental principle, patient control, and yet balances the consequence-oriented need for access to coverage and quality care that is financially sustainable over the long term,” writes the author.

A GLOBAL FUND FOR EDUCATION: ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR ALL

Brookings Institution, August 31, 2009

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2009/08_education_gartner/08_education_gartner.pdf

In order to realize the world’s commitment to ensuring education for all by 2015, important innovations and reforms will be needed in the governance and financing of global education. In 2008, Presidential Candidate Barack Obama committed to making sure that every child has the chance to learn by creating a Global Fund for Education. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has recently called for a new architecture of global cooperation that requires institutions to “combine the efficiency and capacity for action with inclusiveness.” A new Global Fund for Education should be an independent and inclusive multi-stakeholder institution that builds upon existing institutions and supports country-driven solutions, says the report.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA: A REPORT ON HATE CRIMES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS 2008

National Coalition for the Homeless, August 2009

http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/hatecrimes/hate_report_2008.pdf

The report shows the numbers of hate crimes and violent attacks against people experiencing homelessness. “Those experiencing homelessness are often ignored or misunderstood by society. If these brutal attacks were committed against any other religious or minority group to the same degree, there would be a national outcry and call for governmental action,” said Michael Stoops, executive director of NCH. “We must respond to this dehumanization and protect homeless persons against hate crimes and violence.”

THE HIGH COST OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS: WHAT THE NATION PAYS FOR INADEQUATE HIGH SCHOOLS

Alliance for Excellent Education, September 1, 2009

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/HighCost.pdf>

If the high school students who dropped out of the Class of 2009 had graduated, the nation's economy would have benefited from nearly \$335 billion in additional income over the course of their lifetimes, according to the brief. Not only do high school dropouts earn less when they are employed, they are much more likely to be unemployed during the current economic recession, the brief finds.

HITTING BOTTOM? : AN UPDATED ANALYSIS OF RENTS AND THE PRICE OF HOUSING IN 100 METROPOLITAN AREAS

Center for Economic and Policy Research, August 2009

<http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/100city-2009-08.pdf>

The report compares home prices and annual rents across 100 metropolitan markets to evaluate the state of the housing market. The data indicates that while a bottom may be in sight, the slump in the market is likely to persist for some time. The findings also support the viability of Right-to-Rent legislation, which would allow homeowners facing foreclosure to remain in their homes as renters paying a fair market rent.

HOW WE CAN PAY FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

Urban Institute, July 29, 2009

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411932_howwecanpay.pdf

In the paper, the authors discuss alternative ways that health reform could be financed. They analyze different options including several proposals for delivery system reforms and for reduction in Medicare and Medicaid payments. They estimate the cost savings that could occur due to the introduction of a public plan option. Finally, they explore a range of revenue options. The key message of the paper is that health reform can be paid for, but it is best to obtain funds from a large number of measures to spread the burden broadly.

IN TOUGH TIMES, VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA REMAINS STRONG

Corporation for National and Public Service, July 27, 2009

<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/data.cfm>

The report finds that even during a time of prolonged economic recession, volunteering has remained steady, fueled by a compassion boom led by young adults and a wave of do-it-yourself volunteers working with their neighbors to fix problems.

INCOME, POVERTY, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE IN THE UNITED STATES: 2008

Bureau of the Census, September 10, 2009

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p60-236.pdf>

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that real median household income in the United States fell 3.6 percent between 2007 and 2008, from \$52,163 to \$50,303. This breaks a string of three years of annual income increases and coincides with the recession that started in December 2007. The nation's official poverty rate in 2008 was 13.2 percent, up from

12.5 percent in 2007. There were 39.8 million people in poverty in 2008, up from 37.3 million in 2007. Meanwhile, the number of people without health insurance coverage rose from 45.7 million in 2007 to 46.3 million in 2008, while the percentage remained unchanged at 15.4 percent.

THE INTERNET AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Pew Internet & American Life Project, September 2009

<http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2009/The%20Internet%20and%20Civic%20Engagement.pdf>

Contrary to the hopes of some advocates, the internet is not changing the socioeconomic character of civic engagement in America, says the report. Just as in offline civic life, the well-to-do and well-educated are more likely than those less well off to participate in online political activities such as emailing a government official, signing an online petition or making a political contribution.

MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: HOW MANY COME? HOW MANY LEAVE?

Pew Hispanic Center, July 22, 2009

<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/112.pdf>

The flow of immigrants from Mexico to the United States has declined sharply since mid-decade, but there is no evidence of an increase during this period in the number of Mexican-born migrants returning home from the U.S., according to the report. Mexican-born population in the U.S., which had been growing earlier in the decade, was 11.5 million in early 2009. That figure is not significantly different from the 11.6 million Mexican immigrants in 2008 or the 11.2 million in 2007. The current recession has had a harsh impact on employment of Latino immigrants, raising the question of whether an increased number of Mexican-born residents are choosing to return home.

NO EXIT: THE EXPANDING USE OF LIFE SENTENCES IN AMERICA

The Sentencing Project, July 2009

http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_noexit.pdf

The report finds a record 140,610 individuals serving life sentences in state and federal prisons, 6,807 of whom were juveniles at the time of the crime. In addition, 29% of persons serving a life sentence (41,095) have no possibility of parole, and 1,755 were juveniles at the time of the crime. The report represents the first nationwide collection of life sentence data documenting race, ethnicity and gender.

THE OBAMA PLAN: STABILITY & SECURITY FOR ALL AMERICANS

The White House, September 2009

http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/health_care/plan/

“It will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance. It will provide insurance to those who don’t. And it will lower the cost of health care for our families, our businesses, and our government,” says President Obama.

A PORTRAIT OF MORMONS IN THE U.S

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, July 24, 2009

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1292/mormon-religion-demographics-beliefs-practices-politics>

In Utah, July 24 is Pioneer Day, a state holiday commemorating the day in 1847 when the first Mormon settlers, led by Brigham Young, entered the Salt Lake Valley. Today, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Mormon groups make up 58% of Utah's population and 1.7% of the total U.S. adult population, according to the report.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES AMONG LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Urban Institute, August 11, 2009

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411936_racialandethnic.pdf

Low-income status in the United States varies significantly by race and ethnicity. Of the more than 13.4 million families with children living on incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, 30 percent are Hispanic, 22 percent are black or African American, and 6 percent are other nonwhites. This fact sheet provides statistics on racial and ethnic differences in family structure, work effort, nativity or immigration status, earnings, and education.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON HEALTH CARE

The White House, September 10, 2009

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-a-Joint-Session-of-Congress-on-Health-Care/

The President addresses a joint session of Congress laying out what he expects in health insurance reform.

RITE OF PASSAGE? WHY YOUNG ADULTS BECOME UNINSURED AND HOW NEW POLICIES CAN HELP, 2009 UPDATE

The Commonwealth Fund, August 6, 2009

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/~media/Files/Publications/Issue%20Brief/2009/Aug/1310_Nicholson_rite_of_passage_2009.pdf

Young adults ages 19 to 29 are one of the largest segments of the U.S. population without health insurance: 13.2 million, or 29 percent, lacked coverage in 2007. They often lose coverage at age 19 or upon high school or college graduation: nearly two of five (38%) high school graduates who do not enroll in college and one-third of college graduates are uninsured for a time during the first year after graduation. Twenty-six states have passed laws to expand coverage of dependents to young adults under parents' insurance policies. Congressional proposals to reform the health system could help uninsured young adults gain coverage and prevent others from losing it, according to the report.

SPOTLIGHT ON NATURALIZATION TRENDS

Migration Policy Institute, August 2009

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=737>

Fluttering American flags and patriotic songs are staples of the citizenship ceremony in the United States, home to 16.2 million naturalized citizens in 2007. This spotlight examines foreign nationals age 18 and older who became US citizens (i.e., naturalized) in 2008. It also highlights some of the trends surrounding naturalization since the 1980s.

TEACHER QUALITY: SUSTAINED COORDINATION AMONG KEY FEDERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS COULD ENHANCE STATE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TEACHER QUALITY

U.S. Government Accountability Office, August 7, 2009

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09593.pdf>

Policymakers and researchers have focused on improving the quality of our nation's 3 million teachers to raise the achievement of students in key academic areas, such as reading and mathematics. Given the importance of teacher quality to student achievement and the key role federal and state governments play in supporting teacher quality, GAO's objectives included examining (1) the extent that the U.S. Department of Education (Education) funds and coordinates teacher quality programs, (2) studies that Education conducts on teacher quality and how it provides and coordinates research-related assistance to states and school districts, and (3) challenges to collaboration within states and how Education helps address those challenges.

10 REASONS TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL

Families USA, July 2009

<http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/health-reform/10-reasons-to-support-reform.pdf>

The report provides a quick rundown of the provisions in the health reform bills pending in Congress.

U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY LIKELY TO BOOST POPULATION

Yale Global, July 30, 2009

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=12620>

As the new US Administration and Congress begin to tackle immigration reform they will again be faced with the weighty question of how large should America's population be in the future.

Should America's population continue to grow indefinitely, perhaps doubling to 600 million by the end of the century? Clearly, any answer to this vital demographic question has serious and far-reaching economic, political, social and environmental consequences for America as well as for the international community of nations, says the author.

U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY ON PERMANENT ADMISSIONS

Congressional Research Service, July 20, 2009

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/126517.pdf>

Four major principles underlie current U.S. policy on permanent immigration: the reunification of families, the admission of immigrants with needed skills, the protection of refugees, and the diversity of admissions by country of origin. These principles are embodied in the *Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)*. The INA specifies a complex set of numerical limits and preference categories that give priorities for permanent

immigration reflecting these principles. Legal permanent residents (LPRs) refer to foreign nationals who live permanently in the United States.

THE U.S. NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY IN TRANSITION

Congressional Research Service, July 8, 2009

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/126872.pdf>

The U.S. newspaper industry is suffering through what could be its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Advertising revenues are plummeting due to the severe economic downturn, while readership habits are changing as consumers turn to the Internet for free news and information.

Some major newspaper chains are burdened by heavy debt loads. In the past year, seven major newspaper chains have declared bankruptcy, several big city papers have shut down, and many have laid off reporters and editors, imposed pay reductions, cut the size of the physical newspaper, or turned to Web-only publication.

YOUNG WORKERS: THE LOST DECADE

AFL-CIO, August 2009

http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/laborday/upload/laborday2009_report.pdf

This report, based on a nationwide survey of 1,156 people, examines young workers' economic standing, attitudes and hopes for the future.

All previous web alerts can be found at:
<http://france.usembassy.gov/web-alert.html>